

CLAIMS

1. A system for transmitting information in a broadcast distribution system that is targeted to a system user comprising:

5 a) a network headend for transmitting at least one information stream to a plurality of users, said information stream being comprised of a plurality of information selections and a plurality of corresponding codes, each said code identifying a characteristic of a corresponding one of said selections that is employed to identify a system user to whom either said selection should be transmitted, or additional information should be transmitted;

10 b) a distribution network for transmitting said information stream with said codes;

and

15 c) a plurality of terminal devices interfaced to said distribution network for receiving said information stream, each said terminal device including a terminal processor and a user demographic database that contains demographic information about a corresponding user of said terminal device, said terminal processor being programmed to compare each code for each selection in said information stream with said demographic information in said database, and determine there from whether said user is designated to receive said selection or additional information.

20 2. The system of claim 1, wherein said headend further includes an encoder for generating said codes, and inserting said codes into said information stream, one each before a corresponding one of said selections.

25 3. The system of claim 1, wherein said information stream is a video information stream, said broadcast distribution system is a cable television distribution system, and said terminal devices are each a set top converter box.

30 4. The system of claim 3, wherein said information selections include advertisements.

5. The system of claim 1, wherein said terminal processor is further programmed to provide a prompt to a corresponding user if said processor determines that said user is

designated to receive said additional information.

6. The system of claim 5, wherein said headend further includes a database containing said additional information that is to be made available to selected system users, 5 based on the demographic information in the user demographic database.

7. The system of claim 1, wherein said headend includes a multiplexer for simultaneously transmitting a plurality of said information streams on a plurality of corresponding downstream channels that are interfaced between said distribution network 10 and said terminal devices, each said information stream including information selections that are targeted to different user demographics, and said terminal processor in each said terminal is programmed to determine a selected one of said downstream channels on which a selected information selection targeted to a user of said terminal device is to be received, and access said selected information selection.

15 8. The system of claim 7, wherein said terminal device further includes a tuner for selecting a one of said downstream channels to receive, and said terminal processor is further programmed to instruct said tuner to tune to said selected one of said downstream channels to receive said selected information selection.

20 9. The system of claim 8, wherein said terminal processor is further programmed to instruct said tuner to tune back to a previously selected channel after a designated one of said selections has been received.

25 10. The system of claim 7, wherein said information streams include at least one group of information selections, each selection of which is simultaneously transmitted with the other selections in said group, and is targeted to users having different demographics than those of users to which the other selections in said group are targeted.

30 11. The system of claim 10, wherein said headend further includes an insertion module for inserting said groups of information selections into said information streams.

12. The system of claim 10, wherein each information selection in said groups comprises an advertisement.

5 13. The system of claim 11, wherein each information selection is transmitted in a different PID of a common digital channel.

14. A method for transmitting information in a broadcast distribution system that is targeted to a system user comprising:

10 a) providing at least one information stream in a network headend, said information stream being comprised of a plurality of information selections and a plurality of corresponding codes, each said code identifying a characteristic of a corresponding one of said selections that is employed to identify a system user to whom either said selection should be transmitted, or additional information should be transmitted;

15 b) transmitting said at least one information stream to a plurality of terminal devices, each said terminal device including a terminal processor and a user demographic database that contains demographic information about a corresponding user of said terminal device; and

20 c) employing said terminal processor to compare each code for each selection in said information stream with said demographic information in said database, and determine there from whether said user is designated to receive said selection or additional information.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein said codes are inserted in said at least one information stream by an encoder in said headend. The step of providing at least one information stream further comprises obtaining a first information stream and encoding said first information stream with said codes to form said at least one information stream generating said codes, and inserting said codes into said information stream, one each before a corresponding one of said selections.

30 16. The method of claim 14, wherein said information stream is a video

information stream, said broadcast distribution system is a cable television distribution system, and said terminal devices are each a set top converter box.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein said information selections include
5 advertisements.

18. The method of claim 14, further comprising the step of providing a prompt to a corresponding user if said terminal processor determines that said user is designated to receive said additional information.

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19. The method of claim 18, further comprising the step of transmitting said additional information from a database in said headend.

20. The method of claim 1, wherein said step of transmitting further comprises:

15 1) multiplexing a plurality of said information streams and simultaneously transmitting said plurality of information streams, each said information stream including information selections that are targeted to different user demographics;

20 2) determining with said terminal processor a selected one of said information selections that is targeted to a user of said terminal device; and

3) accessing said selected one of said information selections from said information stream.

25 21. The method of claim 20, wherein said terminal device further includes a tuner for selecting a one of said downstream channels to receive, and said step of accessing further comprises instructing said tuner with said terminal processor to tune to said selected one of said downstream channels to receive said selected information selection.

30 22. The method of claim 21, further comprising the step of instructing said tuner with said terminal processor to tune back to a previously selected channel after a designated one of said selections has been received.

23. The method of claim 20, wherein said information streams include at least one group of information selections, each selection of which is simultaneously transmitted with the other selections in said group, and is targeted to users having different demographics than those of users to which the other selections in said group are targeted.

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24. The method of claim 20, wherein each information selection in said group is transmitted in a different PID of a common digital channel.

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